

Remarks

In the Office Action of August 1, 2005, the Examiner rejected claims 16-35 under Section 102(b) as being anticipated by Ringdahl U.S. Patent No. 6,053,693, Saucier U.S. Patent No. 5,605,431, Dudynskyj U.S. Patent No. 4,124,099 and Niccoli DE 33 43 724. (Claims 1-15 had been previously canceled.) By the present amendment and response, applicants have amended claims 16-35 and present new claims 36-40. (Applicants note that their Supplemental Amendment and Response was not entered by the Examiner.) Accordingly, claims 16-40 remain for prosecution.

As defined in amended claims 16-30 and new claims 36-40, the claimed invention comprises a lifting mechanism having a vertical arm that is secured adjacent to the inboard end of the platform, a linkage that extends between a location on the lifting mechanism and the platform to move the platform from the transfer level position to the vertically stowed position and a second linkage extending between, or an actuator coupling, the first linkage and the barrier/bridge plate that is pivotally connected to the inboard end of the platform. The second linkage or actuator moves the plate between a barrier and bridging position. In amended claims 31-35, the linkage coupled to the barrier/bridge plate for moving the plate and which extends between a location on the vertical lifting mechanism arm and the platform for moving the platform from the transfer level position to the vertically stowed position comprises a telescoping member. None of the prior art references discloses or teaches such a structure.

In Ringdahl U.S. Patent No. 6,053,693, arms 84, 92 are part of the "lifting mechanism" and are not part of the "linkage" that extends between a location on the lifting mechanism arm and the platform to move the platform between the transfer level position to the vertically stowed position as applicants have defined those terms in the claims. Arms 84, 92 couple the vertical arm 93 of the lifting mechanism to the motor 64; they do not extend between vertical arm 93 and the platform 8. Thus, arms 120, 124 and 130 cited by the Examiner for moving the plate 16 do not extend between the claimed linkage that moves the platform between the transfer level and stowed positions and the inboard plate as does applicants' claimed second linkage or actuator. In contrast to applicants' claimed second linkage or actuator, the Ringdahl arms 120, 124 and 130 extend from a location on the vertical arm of the lifting mechanism to the plate 16. Thus, applicants respectfully submit that amended claims 16-30 and new claims 36-40 are patentably distinguishable from the Ringdahl '693 and '041 devices.

Likewise, in the Saucier U.S. Patent No. 5,605,431, the pulley and cable system used to move the inboard plate does not extend between the plate and a location on the linkage 52, 54 and 58 that is used to move the platform between the transfer level and stowed positions. The Saucier cable system extends between the lifting mechanism and plate as those terms are defined in applicants' claims.

As to amended claims 31-35, neither the Ringdahl '693 nor Saucier '041 patent teaches a linkage comprising a telescoping member wherein the linkage extends from a location on the vertical lifting mechanism arm for moving the platform from the transfer level position to the stowed position and for moving the barrier/bridge plate.

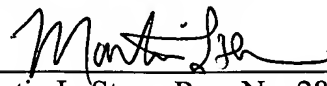
The Dudynskyj U.S. Patent No. 4,124,099 and Niccoli DE 33 43 724 devices suffer from the same deficiencies as Ringdahl and Saucier. In addition, neither Dudynskyj nor Niccoli discloses or teaches a device wherein the barrier/bridge plate is pivotally attached to the movable platform. To the contrary, in both references, the so-called pivotal plate is attached to a stationary structure and, therefore, does not move with the platform. Consequently, the pivotal plates of Dudynskyj and Niccoli do not have a raised barrier position with respect to the platform as called for by the claims.

As to claims 31-33, Niccoli does not disclose or teach a structure in which the linkage that moves the platform between the transfer level and stowed positions and moves the barrier/bridge plate extends between a location on the vertical lifting mechanism arm and the platform and comprises a telescoping member. In Niccoli, the telescoping member is the vertical arm of the lifting mechanism and is not part of the recited linkage that moves the pivotal inboard plate. Moreover, as pointed out above, the Niccoli pivotal plate is not connected to the movable platform and, therefore, does not serve as a barrier plate for the platform as required by the claims.

Thus, applicants respectfully request favorable consideration and allowance of all pending claims 16-40.

Date: 10/7/05

Respectfully submitted,



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